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ABSTRACT

The State University College at Oswego, N.Y., has developed a multi-media English composition program designed to increase the effectiveness of the teaching of English in colleges and secondary schools, and to provide instructional, clinical, and practical experience for prospective English teachers and liberal arts English majors, while developing the writing skills of college students. The program was initiated in September 1968 with tentative selections of commercial materials and the preparation of locally produced materials. By February 1969 a pilot run-through was possible and in the spring semester weekly evaluation meetings were held and student teachers had direct supervisory support and evaluation in using the new techniques. Themes were written, then recorded on tape with both versions being submitted to the instructor, who marked grammatical and punctuation errors on the paper and recorded comments on more abstract matters on the tape. Pre-recorded 20-minute lectures dealt with subjects such as organizational patterns, sentence variety, paragraph arrangement, etc. Representative student papers were recorded on television to serve as a library/clinic for students. An attempt was also made to enable students to translate from pictorial-oral to verbal-aural literacy by the use of slide transparencies on three-screen projection synchronized to sound. (MBM)

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ENGLISH COMPOSITION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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ENGLISH COMPOSITION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Program Summary

The College at Oswego has developed a multi-media and multi-environmental three-pronged, all college, English Composition program designed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching of English both in colleges and in secondary schools. This new approach provides instructional, clinical, and practical experience for prospective English teachers and Liberal Arts English majors while also helping to develop the writing skills of college students. The total process is based upon the belief that "the art of writing cannot be taught and the craft of writing may be taught, but the skill of writing can be taught -- and with great success by means of a multi-media approach" As specifically developed, the multi-media course content is used for:

1. English 6: Advanced English Composition, for Arts & Science English majors and Education majors with English concentration.

2. English 182: Supervised Writing Laboratory, for Composition tutors who work in the English Clinic.

3. Freshman English Clinic: For students with marginal writing ability, on a referal basis.

The work in these courses employs a combination of:

1. Large Group Instruction. *

   a. Multi-media presentations for basic concepts and basic writing principles.

   b. In-class sessions that include immediate feedback by evaluating work done by students that is projected on the overhead projector.

   c. Multi-media Idea Saturation Programs related to current topics to provoke student reaction.

* Materials used in large group instruction are also available to students for follow-up work through a multi-media carrel study laboratory.

2. Student Work.

   a. Writing of themes based upon or provoked by Idea Saturation Programs.

   b. Student narration of themes on Cassette tape recorders.

   c. Submission of finished typed theme and its narration.

3. Instructor Evaluation.

   a. Listening to student tape while reading and marking paper simultaneously.

   b. Instructor's marginal notes along with comments on reverse side of Cassette tape narration.

4. Diagnosis and Prescription.

   a. Diagnosis of student deficiencies by instructor (noted on theme and described on tape).

   b. Prescribed action for the student to correct deficiencies currently include special mini-lecture demonstration Super 8 mm sound concept film loops (films prepared by the instructor relating to the eight most frequently identified writing deficiencies) that can be viewed in mediated carrels. Also used are the basic slide materials used for initial instruction during large-group sessions.

      Subsequent self-study sequences are being planned for prescriptive work in the areas of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary.

   c. Questions not covered by prescribed media materials are answered during instructor/student conferences.

The future English teachers not only have an opportunity to experience English Composition with an innovative format taught by a master instructor and author, but they also serve as a pool from which tutors and clinicians are selected for the Supervised Writing Lab and for the Freshman English Clinic. During special sessions the tutor with his tutoree has an opportunity to use the multi-media materials in a teacher-learner situation

with 2-7 students. This helps him become more fully aware of the effect media can have during the learning process; armed with these experiences he can see how he may apply and evaluate similar techniques while teaching in a secondary school situation. The student teacher supervisor works with the on-campus instructor in the quarter course in Composition, multi-mediated like English 6, but exclusively for Education majors with English concentrations. This creates a direct relationship and articulation between the methods espoused on campus and those practiced.

Explanation and Anlysis

The development of the multi-media approach to English Composition began in September 1968 when Professor Paul Briand, as one of four of the Oswego instructional faculty assigned to the Office of Learning Resources, began to explore the feasibility of applying media to various disciplines. The basic objective for all of these programs was simply to develop and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of instruction. Efforts in the English program have been devoted specifically to the area of Composition with three major emphases:

1. To develop instructional programs for more effective and efficient teaching of English Composition at the college level.

2. To develop writing skills in college students, especially those with marginal writing ability.

3. To develop in prospective English teachers the ability to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their own writing, and that of their future students in secondary schools.

Following the identification of direction for the program, the instructional faculty assigned to the curriculum development programs were thoroughly oriented to the organization, personnel, and potential services of the Learning Resources Center. Two tracks of action began to take place simultaneously. The faculty members attended a weekly meeting that also involved professional media personnel, curriculum specialists, and evaluation specialists. These sessions were used for general information exchange and for sounding out ideas and problems. At the same time, each Professor began to devote considerable time to identifying commercially available materials he might find appropriate for his program. Once the tentative selections of commercial materials had been made, work was begun with the local (Oswego Learning Resources) graphic artist, photographer, television producer/directors, and other support staff who helped determine how the Professor could create a unified program using both commercially available and locally produced materials.

As the commercial and locally produced materials became available, they were used with the pilot student group that was being taught Advanced Composition during that semester. The processes of commercial acquisition, local production, review, and revision took place throughout the Fall semester of 1968; by February 1969, the general course format had sufficiently evolved and resource units were developed to make a pilot run-through possible. During the 1969 Spring semester, the weekly evaluation meeting and pilot instructional programs continued. Also, during this time additional materials were produced and evaluation phases began to materialize.

By the end of the second semester, the English Composition Development Program had become a total team effort involving the Professor, the Director of Learning Resources, the Director of Institutional Research, Learning Resources Coordinators for large-group multi-media systems, television production, materials production and self-study laboratories, technical assistance from the television engineer, television technicians, audio service production technicians, media librarian, graphic artist, photographer, and a host of students employed as television cameramen, floor managers, and set personnel. The development of this complete program could not come about except through the talents and full cooperation of all these people. "This innovative type of program," Professor Briand said, "requires a total team approach. The most difficult adjustment for the Professor is that he has to rely upon others for what in the past has always been his responsibility."

By the time the initial stages of this program were fully developed, the budget exceeded $23,000. This amount includes the halftime salary for the Professor for two semesters, the percentage of time devoted to the project by all those service personnel listed above, and for the materials that were locally produced. A detailed budget outline is presented in Exhibit A of this report. (Note that this project was college sponsored and that only $3,400 was requested from outside sources and that for the final evaluation phase only.)

The contribution of this project to the improvement of teacher education and to the education of secondary school students in English Composition is imminent. Never before have those involved had the

opportunity to deal so completely with the problems of the individual student and never before has the prospective teacher had such an opportunity to become involved with his own learning process. If the saying "teachers teach as they have been taught" holds true, this program will have a direct and lasting effect on both college and secondary English education. The results have been encouraging. Students are enthused and they have voluntarily reported back regarding very successful student teaching experiences by using the principles from their college learning program. This year student teachers have direct supervisory support and evaluation regarding their application and success in using these new techniques.

However enthusiastic and favorable opinions are, they are not sufficient evidence of successful goal attainment. Careful attention to objective evaluation has lead to an ongoing systematic appraisal process in this development project. For the Advanced Composition students, themes on prescribed topics are written at the start and end of the semester, and experts read and rate the themes without knowledge of when or by whom the theme was written. In addition, the marginal writers' changes in writing skills are appraised by using short-structured writing tasks designed to expose the growth in one ability at a time. The carry over from college exposure to the high school teaching role for the prospective secondary education English teacher is evaluated through observation by supervisors from the college. This is supplemented by an objective comparison of the high school students' writing production under the new system to those under the more traditional system.

Turned On:
Multi-Media and Advanced Composition

by

Paul Briand

After seventeen years of teaching composition, I was convinced that the art of writing could not be taught, that the craft of writing may be taught, and the skill of writing could be taught but only with indifferent success. When my chairman asked me if I would like to work up a program in a multi-media approach to advanced composition, therefore, I readily accepted, especially when he offered me the released time in which to do it. Discouraged at my long failure to turn my students on about theme writing, I was ready to try anything.

Initially, I researched the subject--compiling a bibliography of books and articles (NCTE has the best single collection) and making a list of available materials in film, film strips, television kinescopes, 35 mm slides, transparencies for overhead projectors, records, audio tapes, programmed instruction for teaching machines, and programs in computer-assisted instruction. I had no idea what I would come up with, and that made for the excitement of the adventure into multi-media. I did know, however, that my course and I needed help in four main areas: subjects for theme writing (what to write about?); theme discussion in class (students are bored when the theme is not theirs); the teaching of theme writing (rhetoric frightens students, grammar turns them off, and spelling and punctuation turn them away); and theme grading.

I was heartened by what I found, and I have been offering experimentally since the spring semester of 1969, English 6x, my turned on course in advanced composition, turned on because it is plugged into multi-media.

THEME GRADING

At first I thought I would grade each student's theme on television; he could watch me mark and listen to me criticize his paper. Each student would have his own reel of video tape, he could play it back on his time, he would have a record (sic) of his progress, he could have instant replay any time he wanted to see and hear again. This proved too expensive and too time-consuming. But audio tape works almost as well. Each student has his own cassette tapes (he buys like textbooks, two or three; one hour on each); he writes his paper, records it on tape, and submits both to the instructor. The instructor marks the paper for such visible errors as comma splices, and fused sentences, disagreements between subject and verb and pronoun and antecedent, and misspellings; but he reserves for the tape recorder his comments on such larger more abstract matters as the introduction of subject and establishment of thesis, organization and development, conclusion and style and diction. The student has a record of his progress, can replay at will, and hopefully his writing will begin to "sound" like him now that he can hear it (probably for the first time). Also on the tape recorder, the instructor, having diagnosed the ills of the student's writing, would then recommend such treatment for their cure as so many prescribed doses before teaching machine programs (on his time, not the instructor's) for such maladies as strep punctuation, viral grammar, and malodorous spelling; for the more esoteric rhetorical problems, he would have to view and listen to instructor-prepared, kinescoped, twenty-minute lectures (pre-recorded from previous classroom theme discussions or taped under controlled conditions in the TV studio) on such matters as purpose, organizational patterns, concrete development, sentence variety, and psychological impact of sentence and paragraph arrangement (again, on his time and not the instructor's).

CLASSROOM THEME DISCUSSION

Because the instructor will use them again later for private, student theme therapy, he will want to record on television his analysis of representative student papers, analyzing one paper for a particular problem, another for another, until he has a good sampling of student writing maladies along with his recommended treatments for their cure; these minilectures and the teaching machine programs will serve as a library/clinic for students with writing problems.

As an other way to discuss in class particular writing problems, I would turn the classroom into a writing workshop, into a kind of a newspaper city room in which the instructor is an editor but with an overhead projector on and by which he edits copy for the benefit of all the writers in the room. The editor/instructor would need a Thermofax or other type of heat-copier machine at hand or close by so that he could readily make transparencies, put them on the overhead projector, and edit them with grease pencil there and then. I would ask my writers to write no more than one paragraph on a page but it would not have to fill the page; then in my editing-correcting discussion of the paragraph transparency, I could proceed from word, to sentence, to paragraph, and to the different kinds of paragraph for introduction, conclusion, and development. These classroom exercises I would not grade, in order to give the student a chance to write without pressure and worry, to experiment perhaps with ways of writing he has dared not try before; and seeing that these exercises are not graded, the student should have the comfortable anonymity of turning in his work without his name on it.

TEACHING THEME WRITING

I once had a flight instructor who told me he would "learn me" how to fly a light plane, and he did-not by teaching me but by showing me how to fly. So should it be in learning how to write. If the instructor must lecture on certain writing principles, let him keep those lectures short, to no more than twenty minutes, so that the class can spend the rest of the time actually doing what the principles require. Let the students see the instructor actually writing and re-writing and re-writing the different kinds of sentences and paragraphs and the reasons for them on the overhead projector. As for the minilectures themselves, I am planning a three-screen projection with 35mm. slide transparencies, where each point is made first on the center screen then moved to one of the two side screens as more points are made. For example, I would first show the thesis sentence for a theme on the center panel, then move it to the right panel and hold it there. Next I would show the topic sentences for the paragraphs in the body of the paper on the center panel, then move them to the left panel and hold them there. Finally, I would show the theme from beginning to end, one paragraph at a time, on the center panel. As this is done, I would ask one of the students to read the paragraphs out loud as they are being shown, so the class could enjoy the double-channel advantage of seeing and hearing at the same time. I am planning eighteen of these slide presentation/minilectures, but I don't expect to use more than twelve.

SUBJECTS FOR THEME WRITING

What subjects will interest students sufficiently so that they will be able to write about them, competently if not well, adequately if not forcefully, so as not to be misunderstood if not clearly? My students complain about subjects for

theme writing no matter where they come from-from me, from a book of readings, or from the students themselves. Nothing seems to turn them on well enough so that they will want to write; I have tried to no avail subjects like student unrest, pot, racism, the population explosion, pre-extra-intra-marital sex, pollution--water, air, or both. I have tried controlled-research papers and open-research papers. I have tried one long paper instead of several short papers; I have tried one-paragraph papers as opposed to several-paragraph papers. Because nothing I have tried has worked I am willing to try something else. If my students have no verbal literacy to speak of, do they (because they are children brought up on viewing instead of reading) have visual literacy? From pictorial-oral can they translate into verbal-aural linear literacy? In other words, can they change lines of photographic and electronic dots of light into lines of movable type? It is worth a try.

To this end, I have planned six idea-saturation programs, multi-channeled in multi-media, so that the students will be assaulted on as many sense levels as possible. The programs will be based primarily on 35mm. slide transparencies focused on three-screen projection and synchronized to sound; the same programs will also use kinescopes and films. For example, if a particular program were on war, the 35mm. slides could be moved to the two side panels, there to be held or changed, while a film clip or kinescope of a battle or engagement was shown on the center panel.

The only drawback to such programs is that they require a great deal of time to prepare. Photographs must be taken, developed, mounted, put in trays, viewed, edited, and viewed again; music or narration must be taped, listened to, edited, listened to again, and synchronized to the slides. Thousand of feet of film and kinescope must be viewed, selected, and edited. It is always

cheaper to rent than to buy film, but what if your rented film does not arrive on time? Finally, to get the visual and the aural properly integrated and synchronized, the instructor of whom we have already made a writer/editor, a TV actor amd tape recording artist, now also becomes a photographer/director/producer. Fortunately for the instructor, so that he will not have to become a stage manager too, synchro-tape is commercially available for putting all the audio and visual together for operation from one punched tape; otherwise, the instructor would need helpers to operate the slide projectors, tape recorders or record players, and kinescope/movie projectors.

Such a multi-media approach to advanced composition as I have described it would be initially expensive, about three or four thousand dollars; but after that it should be relatively easy to maintain. Luckily for me, at the State University College at Oswego, New York, a Learning Resouces Center fully staffed with media specialists and housed in a brand new building with classrooms fanning out from a central core where rear-projection on two and three screens can be made from the core and where TV monitors for student viewing just out from the walls. Classrooms like this are literally wired for multi-media.

Equally wired but much more expensive, however, are the computers, which will undoubtedly serve the multi-media composition course of the future. The writer will sit at a typewriter before a console equipped with several panels for viewing, microphones for talking and asking questions, and speakers or earphones or earplugs for listening. Presently available are programs in computer assisted instruction for essay analysis, in spelling, in reading, in grammar, in rhetorical patterns for composition, and in the inductive display of the characteristic features of the various literary genres. That is where

the composition course of the future will be--at the computer console.

Today, however, it is still in the classroom but it works better if plugged into multi-media, turned on to slide projectors and movie projectors and three-screen panels for viewing, turned on to kinescope for viewing on television monitors, turned on to cassette tape recorder/players and record players. That, as my teen-aged son would say, is where it's at, Dad.

Despite these advances, however, I am still convinced that the art of writing cannot be taught and that the craft of writing may be taught, but that the skill of writing can be taught--and with great success-by means of a multi-media approach.